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SUBJECT: UN BUDGET: SUBREGIONAL OFFICES OF THE ECONOMIC
COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

REF: A. 2005 USUN 2189

[1](#)B. USUN 0050

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: In response to General Assembly (GA) resolution 60/235, the Secretary-General has presented a comprehensive action plan with regard to the subregional offices of the Economic Commission for Africa (A/61/471). The report explains how the Secretary-General is implementing the recommendations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (A/60/120 and reftels), as well as the results of the Commission's own review of its work. The Secretary-General proposes to increase the staffing of the

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subregional offices by 16 posts, seven to be redeployed through existing resources and an additional 9 to be requested in the context of the 2008-2009 budget. The reports are currently under discussion in the Fifth Committee. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. The OIOS review of the management of the subregional offices (SROs) at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) led to 14 recommendations, including the need to clarify the mandates and roles of the SROs, enhance the impact of the SROs, align staff expertise and skills with subregional priorities, and ensure reliable mechanisms of coordination between SROs and ECA headquarters. In addition, the new Executive Secretary of the Commission, also conducted a review of ECA, with a view to repositioning the organization to better respond to the challenges facing Africa. The current action plan presented to the GA reflects the findings of both reviews.

[1](#)3. The report states the Secretariat's intent to refocus the mission for the SROs. The new mission will include: taking the lead in shaping the Commission's agenda and implementing it at the subregional level; promoting and supporting specific subregional priorities and programs; operating as subregional nodes for knowledge management and networking; and coordinating United Nations system activities for subregional integration. In addition, there will be increased clarity with regard to services provided and the SROs will now play a more active role in: advisory services and technical cooperation; knowledge-sharing and networking; and advocacy and consensus-building.

[1](#)4. The ECA has also changed its planning and programming framework, whereby planning will begin at the subregional office level and then build up. As requested by the GA in resolution 60/235, the strategic framework for this program includes indicators at the subregional level. The report also states that the subregional offices will work to improve partnerships with other subregional actors by: acting as privileged partners of the regional economic communities; partnering with subregional intergovernmental organizations,

including regional and subregional technical cooperation institutions; engaging Member States through UN country teams; participating in a joint African Union/African Development Bank/Economic Commission for Africa program on regional integration; strategic use of regional advisory services; and other key partnerships. The partnership with the regional economic communities will include the signing of partnership agreements with those entities.

15. In order to implement these changes, the ECA proposes to redeploy 5 professional and 2 local level posts to SROs. The plan is to ultimately deploy up to 30 percent of ECA staff to the SROs; currently the percentage is 22.2%. ECA will also request 9 additional P-4 posts in the 2008-2009 budget. Eight posts will be at SROs, with one post at headquarters to coordinate subregional office activity. The Secretary-General requests the GA to take note of the

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measures mentioned in this report.

16. The report (A/61/544) of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) notes that the changes being proposed in the Secretary-General's report raise fundamental questions about the respective roles of the ECA headquarters and subregional offices, as well as their relationship with other UN entities in the subregion. ACABQ urges ECA to "continue to review and define the role of the SROs with a view to achieving synergies and optimizing the use of existing resources, with a greater balance between ECA headquarters and SROs." ACABQ also asks that the number and level of posts for ECA (including the subregional offices) be justified in the proposed program budget for the biennium 2008-2009, including an indication of how existing capacity is being utilized and the impact of extrabudgetary funds. The ACABQ notes that the GA may wish to take note of steps taken to implement OIOS recommendations, without prejudice to recommendations that ACABQ may make on future

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proposals for resources and reorganization.

17. On November 6, the reports of the Secretary-General and ACABQ were introduced in the Fifth Committee. During opening statements, Nigeria (on behalf of the African Group) said the ECA could only promote economic and social development throughout the Africa continent if it had well-equipped, effective and functioning subregional offices to deliver on GA expectations and mandates. She said the responsibility conferred on ECA was not matched with corresponding resources and expressed concern that, in spite of the interim measures taken, actual measures to address the very serious issues faced by ECA were being deferred to 2008-2009, contrary to the wishes of the GA.

18. South Africa (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China) also stressed the need to provide adequate resources for critical areas. The G77, like the African Group, was not clear on the rationale for postponing critical decisions on resource allocation to the ECA in the 2008-2009 proposed budget. She said that was not the approach previously taken with other critical reforms resulting from the World Summit. The G77 said mandated activities should be financed from assessed contributions and the ECA should not be expected to increase its reliance on voluntary financing for the implementation of reform measures and other core activities. The G77 believed it was imperative to ensure that the development of Africa -- one of the eight main priorities of the UN -- received not only political support, but also more concrete and visible action from the Secretariat and GA. Also supporting the African Group and G77 were Brazil and the United Republic of Tanzania.

19. Finland (on behalf of the European Union) noted the ECA had achieved practical results from the OIOS recommendations. The EU acknowledged the need for continuous review and

follow-up to restructure the work of the ECA and its subregional offices. She concluded by saying the ECA needed to continue to define the role of the subregional offices, and expected some of the issues to be considered next year in the context of the budget for 2008-2009.

¶10. COMMENT: The OIOS report considered in the 60th session commented on a wide range of management problems, most of which could be implemented without additional resources. Although the OIOS report stated that there was a lack of adequate resources for subregional offices, it did not specify that additional regular budget resources for ECA were the solution. During negotiations on resolution 60/235, the U.S. and other like-minded delegations fought to bring attention to the other issues identified by OIOS and the need to address these issues before issues of resources are discussed. The current discussions will likely pick up where last year's discussions left off, with Western delegations continuing to seek to understand how OIOS recommendations are being implemented and how existing resources are being utilized. In light of the comments made by the G77 and the African Group during the introduction of the reports, it is clear that they will be pushing for additional resources for ECA for this biennium. Unless otherwise instructed, USUN will seek an endorsement of the ACABQ recommendations. END COMMENT.
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